

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

Staples of life

DuPage County organizations team up to offer groceries, friendship to area refugees

By Kim Becker (kbecker@dailyherald.com)

March 3, 2022

Moving to a new country with only a few possessions and no knowledge of the language or culture can be daunting.

Add in a pandemic and it is downright terrifying.

But refugees living in DuPage County should know they are not alone thanks to Exodus World Service and the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry.

The two organizations teamed in 2020 to launch the Grocery Care Pack program to bring not only grocery staples to these new arrivals, but an offer of friendship and support.

“Refugees start their lives over in the U.S. with next to nothing and face the difficult challenge of learning a new culture and language. What’s more, refugees’ deepest wounds are often emotional,” said Sue Horgan, senior director of program operations for Exodus World Service.

“Even after reaching safety in the U.S., many refugees still struggle with fear and loneliness. They need welcome, friendship and a place to belong.”

Horgan and Laura Glaza, executive director of the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, talk about the initiative and how to volunteer.



Q: Tell us about the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry’s partnership with Exodus World Services.

A: The Grocery Care Pack initiative began early in the pandemic when Exodus World Service identified a need to provide food to the refugees it serves.

Working with the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, the organizations launched the Grocery Care Pack program in DuPage County on April 30, 2020. We served 69 families that were experiencing food insecurity directly related to the COVID-19 outbreak. That number has grown to nearly 150 families.

Refugees, who are invited by the U.S. government to resettle here, have already lived through persecution, war, and violence that led them to flee their home country. They have survived other health crises while waiting in refugee camps. Many of them were reliving those past experiences during the pandemic.

When caring volunteers deliver groceries and offer words of encouragement, relationships grow and true friendships form.

It also is refreshing to see the response of our refugee friends as well. When contacted about receiving a grocery pack, we often hear, “Our family has plenty for this week, please give it to someone in more need.”

First Presbyterian Church, Glen Ellyn, was the original site for this project. After a transition to First Presbyterian, Wheaton, the project moved in November 2021 to Parkview Community Church, 764 St. Charles Road, Glen Ellyn. Other local groups and organizations have supported this project through volunteers and diaper drives.



Q: Tell us about the Grocery Care Pack program.

A: The Grocery Care Pack program is offered the second Tuesday of each month.

Food is delivered by the Northern Illinois Food Bank to Parkview Community Church early in the morning and is unloaded by a group of volunteers. The food is then sorted into packs corresponding to the number of families. In the afternoon, Exodus volunteers pick up the packs and deliver to the families and check on their status.

Typically, six to nine bags of groceries are delivered for each family — more bags for larger families. The groceries come from purchases (at a

reduced price) and donations from the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Contents of the care packs include fresh fruit and vegetables; baked goods like bread and rolls; frozen meat; shelf stable food like cereal, rice, pasta, vegetable oil, peanut butter, canned tuna; personal items such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo; cleaning supplies like laundry detergent; and diapers for families with children.



Q: How many people do you serve each year?

A: 1,701 deliveries in 2021 (average 141 locations per month)

- 32 new families
- 185,000 pounds of groceries total delivered in 2021
- In January 2022, 545 individuals, including 287 children in 143 families, received groceries.

Q: Do you have any other programs that aid refugees?

A: This is the pantry's only program that aids refugees.

For over 30 years, Exodus volunteers have been welcoming our refugee neighbors by collecting and delivering basic household items to turn an apartment into a home.

We also invite volunteers to help ease the loneliness and isolation that many refugees experience when moving to a new country through programs that work to address cultural hurdles such as language, academics, and citizenship, but also pave the way for beautiful, mutual friendships. Learn more at exodusworldservice.org/serve-chicago-area .

Q: How can our readers help?

A: Financial donations can be made by visiting www.GlenEllynFoodPantry.org .

- Donations of groceries are accepted by the pantry from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon Fridays at Grace Lutheran Church, 493 Forest Ave., Glen Ellyn. A list of the pantry's most needed items is updated every week at www.GlenEllynFoodPantry.org .
- Volunteers for the once-a-month Grocery Care Pack program can get the link to volunteer and find out more by emailing GroceryDelivery@GlenEllynFoodPantry.org or katie.fuhs@exodusworldservice.org



Q: What else would you like readers to know?

A: We have been so grateful for the support of volunteers from Glen Ellyn Food Pantry and Exodus World Service that have been so willing and committed to serve the refugee community during this unprecedented time.

One of our new volunteers is a 15-year-old student. While quarantined at home, he decided to take action by emailing friends and family, asking them to donate groceries and toiletries for Grocery Care Packs.

We are so inspired by his heart to mobilize his connections to make a difference in the lives of refugees. This is just one example. We have many amazing volunteers.

Daily Herald

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Caring in action | EXODUS WORLD SERVICE & THE GLEN ELLYN FOOD PANTRY

Staples of life

DuPage County organizations team up to offer groceries, friendship to area refugees

BY KIM BECKER

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Moving to a new country with only a few possessions and no knowledge of the language or culture can be daunting.

Add to a pandemic and it is downright terrifying.

But refugees living in DuPage County should know they are not alone thanks to Exodus World Service and the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry.

The two organizations joined in 2020 to launch the Grocery Care Pack program to bring not only grocery staples to these new arrivals but an offer of friendship and support.

"Refugees from their lives over in the U.S. with near nothing and face the difficult challenge of learning a new culture and language. What's more, refugees' deepest wounds are often emotional," said Kim Logan, senior director of program operations for Exodus World Service.

"Over time reaching safety in the U.S., many refugees still struggle with fear and loneliness. They need welcome, friendship and a place to belong."

Logan and Laura Glass, executive director of the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, talk about the initiative and how to volunteer.

Q Tell us about the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry's partnership with Exodus World Service.



More than 11,000 pounds of essential groceries were distributed to nearly 150 refugee families in DuPage County Feb. 8. Coordinating the event were, from left, Laura Glass, Glen Ellyn Food Pantry; Katie Patis, Exodus World Service; state Rep. Tara Gosia Howard who joined her team in volunteering; and Michelle Merle, Glen Ellyn Food Pantry.

Q The Grocery Care Pack initiative began early in the pandemic when Exodus World Service identified a need to provide food to the refugees it serves.

Working with the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, the organization launched the Grocery Care Pack program in DuPage County on April 30, 2020. We served 68 families that were experiencing food insecurity directly related to the COVID-19 outbreak. That number has grown to nearly 150 families.

Refugees, who are invited by the U.S. government to reside here, have already lived through persecution,

war, and violence that led them to flee their home country. They have survived other health crises while waiting in refugee camps. Many of them were among those past experiences during the pandemic.

When caring volunteers deliver groceries and other needs of encouragement, relationships grow and true friendship here.

It also is refreshing to see the response of our refugee friends as well. When contacted about receiving a grocery pack, we often hear, "Our family has plenty for this week, please give it to someone in need."



Volunteers load up a car with items from the Grocery Care Pack program offered by the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry and Exodus World Service. The groceries are delivered to area refugee families.



Volunteers with the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry's Grocery Care Pack program. Volunteers sort and pack the food donations before delivering the items to refugee families living in DuPage County.

First Presbyterian Church, Glen Ellyn, was the original site for this project. After a donation to First Presbyterian, Wheaton, the project moved in November 2021 to Parkview Community Church, 760 St. Charles Road, Glen Ellyn. Other local groups and organizations have supported this project through volunteer and financial donations.

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A The Grocery Care Pack program is offered the second Tuesday of each month.

Food is delivered by the Northern Illinois Food Bank's Parkview Community Church early in the morning and is unloaded by a group of volunteers. The food is then sorted into packs corresponding to

the number of families in the afternoon. Exodus volunteers pick up the packs and deliver to the families and check on their status.

Typically, six to nine bags of groceries are delivered for each family — even larger for larger families. The groceries come from purchases for a

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The Northern Illinois Food Bank delivers items to Parkview Community Church in Glen Ellyn, which are then sorted and dropped off to refugee families in DuPage County.

Caring: Groceries, friendship help bolster refugee families

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colored peas) and donations from the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Contents of the care packs include fresh fruits and vegetables, boxed goods like cereal and milk, frozen meats, shell, stable food like cereal, rice, pasta, vegetable oil, peanut butter, canned tuna, personal items such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, supplies like laundry detergent, and diapers for families with children.

Q How many people do you serve each year?

A 1,500 deliveries a year (average 140 locations per month).

• 13 warehouses
• 102,000 pounds of groceries delivered to 300
• 15 January 2015, 540 individuals, including 287 children in 143 families, received groceries.

Q Do you have any other programs that aid refugees?

A This is the pantry's only program for adult refugees.

For over 20 years, Foodbank volunteers have been welcoming our refugee neighbors by collecting and delivering basic household items to turn an apartment into a home.

We also invite volunteers to help ease the loneliness and isolation that many refugees experience when moving to a new country through programs that seek to address cultural barriers such as language, academic, and citizenship, but also pave the way for friendship, mutual friendships. Learn more at www.foodbank.org or www.donors.org.

Q How can our readers help?

A Financial donations can be made by visiting www.FoodBank.org.

• Donations of groceries

About the organizations

Glen Ellyn Food Pantry

The Glen Ellyn Food Pantry provides essential groceries and support to people in need of help through a collaboration of local churches and the broader community.

The pantry is dedicated to "making a major impact" in 30-12 communities in Cook, Willard, Elmhurst, Rosemont, Oak Street, Glen Ellyn, Glenview Heights, Oak, Lombard, Wilmette, Woodstock, West Chicago, Wheaton, and Wood Dale.

In 2011, the pantry served 836,000 pounds of food to more than 4,100 neighbors, 29% of which were children.

Currently located in space at Grace Lutheran Church, 423 Third Ave., Glen Ellyn, the pantry was founded in 1975 and is a registered 501(c)(3) organization, 100% privately funded through grants and donations.

For information, visit www.GlenEllynFoodPantry.org or call (630) 403-0800.

are accepted by the pantry from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon Friday at Grace Lutheran Church, 423 First Ave., Glen Ellyn. A list of the pantry's most needed items is updated every week at www.GlenEllynFoodPantry.org.

• Volunteers for the six-month Grocery Care Pack program can get the link to volunteer and find out more by emailing GroceryCare@GlenEllynFoodPantry.org or kate.king@www.donors.org.

Q What else would you like readers to know?

A We have been so grateful

Foodbank World Service

For more than 20 years, Foodbank has been bringing together volunteers and refugees from around the globe with practical opportunities to build bridges of understanding, cross-cultural learning, and friendship.

Foodbank reaches individuals, families, small groups, and entire organizations to help build and work alongside our refugee neighbors.

Nationally, we provide education opportunities in English, individual and regional area internships, we work with our partners in Ukraine to provide food, education support, and health supplies for refugees who have fled Syria.

Since its founding in 1988, Foodbank has welcomed and welcomed nearly 30,000 refugees and engaged more than 62,000 volunteers in the Chicago area.

For information, visit www.foodbankworldservice.org.

for the support of volunteers from Glen Ellyn Food Pantry and Foodbank World Service that have been so willing and committed to serve the refugee community during this unprecedented time.

One of our new volunteers is a 15-year-old student who's volunteered in hours, he decided to take action by emailing friends and family, asking them to donate groceries and supplies for Grocery Care Packs.

We are so inspired by his heart to mobilize his connections to make a difference in the lives of refugees. This is just one example. We have many amazing volunteers.